

Niagara Falls City School District Niagara Falls, New York



2020-21 School Reopening Plan www.nfschools.net

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Introduction by Superintendent Mark Laurrie

COVID-19 has drastically changed the world of education. When schools closed in mid-March, many of us thought that the closure would last a few weeks, maybe even a month, and all would soon return to normal. Yet as the spring of 2020 wore on, we eventually learned the unimaginable – school buildings would stay closed for the remainder of the school year. Now we must be ready to return to school this fall in a way that is radically different from prior years as COVID-19 continues to be a major health threat.

The following plan prepares the Niagara Falls City School District (NFCSD) for the 2020 – 2021 school year, keeping in mind that the District must be ready to regroup at a moment's notice. The coronavirus continues to evolve and the guidance we follow must evolve as well. Providing for the physical and emotional health of our students, faculty and families, while maintaining the highest standards of excellence in education, all guide the NFCSD's reopening.

The NFCSD reopening blueprint is based on a 50% maximum occupancy rate for our buildings. All students will attend classes in an in-person setting two days a week. On the days that a student is not in school, he or she will partake in remote learning.

Our plan addresses the following:

- Health and safety – social distancing, face coverings, frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, screenings
- Nutrition – continuation of the daily free breakfast and lunch program; methods of handling food safely, appropriate social distancing during meals
- Social/emotional well-being – transitioning back to school, providing trauma informed care and counseling
- Facilities – deep cleaning and ventilation
- Transportation – social distancing, face coverings, regular cleaning and disinfecting of buses
- Technology – providing devices and internet access for those in need, continued technical skills training for teachers

Communication is key throughout the whole reopening process. The NFCSD will be with our students, families and community every step of the way, calming fears, answering questions, navigating the unknown. Resuming education in the fall of 2020 requires the ability to adapt and be patient. We are ready!

Mark Laurrie
Superintendent of Schools

Communication/Family and Community Engagement

The NFCSD holds weekly COVID-19 planning meetings with school stakeholders and community members, including administrators, faculty, staff, parents/ guardians, health care experts, and other affiliated organizations to solicit feedback and share updates on our re-opening status. Each of the participating individuals and groups are active members of our District COVID-19 task force and receive frequent written and verbal updates to disseminate to their respective membership.

The NFCSD will continue to use autodialer phone calls, YouTube video updates, emails, district webpage notifications, social media platforms, and local news outlets to communicate with all members of the District community. The Department of Facilities has coordinated efforts with leaders of every district building to ensure federal, state, and local guidelines are being enforced at each location.

The NFCSD is developing “transition camps” for students to attend and faculty members to facilitate in late-August. These camps are intended to acclimate students and faculty back to normal operations. The major focus of these events will be the implementation of necessary safety procedures, like hand washing, social distancing, face covering, and hygiene awareness. The District will hold these camps in a staggered fashion with reduced (50%) capacity to ensure all COVID-19 protocols are properly taught and followed.

The NFCSD will use multiple and varied modalities to communicate with students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Each building has identified consistent entry and exit points where signage reinforcing personal protective equipment (PPE) expectations are clearly displayed. Additionally, trained staff will be available at all times to answer questions and to enforce CDC and DOH guidance.

The NFCSD is committed to equitable access of information for all. Any communications posted on our website and social media can be translated to a student’s native language and written communications will be available in languages other than English. The District retains relationships with translators and interpreters when their services are necessary to share information.

Health and Safety

The NFCSD will adhere to a 50% return to in-person instruction. Students will attend class two (2) days a week with three (3) days a week of remote learning. Fifty percent attendance in all classrooms, offices, and common areas in each building will assist in the ability for all members to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Each student and staff member will be required to wear a comfortable cloth face-covering of their choice. All face-coverings must cover the nose and mouth at all times to prevent respiratory droplets from becoming airborne. Face shields are NOT considered face-covering and will not be acceptable. Cloth face-coverings will be mandatory, with the exceptions of meals and planned face-covering breaks. If a staff member or student does not have a cloth face-covering, one will be provided to them. Any staff member in need of other Personal Protective Equipment for specific task-related services will have such provided upon request. Transportation will also adhere to the mandatory cloth face covering and will also be at 50% for all students who need transportation. The 50% in-person attendance will be reviewed periodically, along with a review of local hospital capacity in collaboration with the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH).

The NFCSD COVID-19 taskforce includes the Superintendent of Schools, administrators/supervisors from District departments, union representatives from all collaborating unions, and a representative of our construction management team. Also, parents, alumni, and transportation owners from the District's two contracted bus providers, as well as the Director of the Niagara County Department of Health. This COVID-19 Taskforce was established on March 9, 2020, and has been an intricate voice in the decision making throughout this uncertain time.

The NFCSD has developed a communication plan to reach students, parents/guardians, staff, and community by School District web page, autodialer calls, YouTube videos, social media (Facebook, Twitter), Our Schools Channel (OSC- TV) District television station in addition to local news and radio stations. All of the District buildings will have appropriate signage, adapted from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), posted on all areas of the property. Webinar training has been offered, and the District website includes informative videos related to COVID-19 training. This is available to anyone who visits our website.

The NFCSD's medical director has established a practice that follows the recommendations from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the guidelines from the CDC. Each classroom/office will have a symptom of the coronavirus sign from the CDC posted with the phone extension to the school nurse's office for each building. The school administrator will notify each employee of the practice and placement of signage within the classroom.

The NFCSD will require all staff members to complete an online questionnaire. Temperatures will be taken before coming into any District building. If any online question is affirmative, the staff member will be directed to contact the District Medical Director for guidance. The survey will be reviewed daily by the Superintendent of Schools or his designee. Parents will be responsible for monitoring the temperatures of students before boarding the school bus or entering a school building. Parents are advised to keep their child home if they have a temperature greater than 100.0° F or if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of a COVID-19 like illness. A questionnaire will be sent home before the student's first day of in-class instruction and periodically throughout the school year for parents to provide updated

emergency contact information, and a review of symptoms of the coronavirus, and when to keep ill students home.

A registered nurse will evaluate each student/staff member experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus in an isolation room. The registered nurse will be required to wear the appropriate PPE listed on a poster outside of the isolation room. A registered nurse will complete an assessment and activate emergency medical services (EMS) if emergency care is needed. For milder symptoms, the staff member will be sent home with a responsible person; for students, the nurse will follow the District practice for sending sick students home. Staff members and students will be required to contact their medical provider for guidance on in-home care and will need to follow the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) recommendations for return to work/school.

All staff and students are asked to self-monitor and stay home if they answer affirmatively to any of the daily online survey questions, or if their temperature is above 100.0°F. The online questionnaire will be monitored by the school nurse each morning, and anyone who identified an affirmative answer will be met at a designated door and sent home. A registered nurse will evaluate each student or staff member who has a temperature, signs of illness, and/or a positive response to the questionnaire in a dedicated isolation area. All students will have continuous supervision by the registered nurse or principal designee until the parent or parent designee arrives to pick up the student.

The NFCSD will ask all visitors and guests to call ahead and adhere to the District questionnaire and self-monitor for temperature prior to entering the school building. Visitors such as parent's and/or family members, or parent designee for student/staff pick up due to illness, will be asked to wait outside, and the registered nurse will escort the individual to the car. All students/staff who are sick will be required to wear a mask, if they can tolerate it, when being escorted to the vehicle. Contractors will complete the same questionnaire and will be required to self-monitor for fever. They will be instructed to stay home from work if they answered affirmatively to any of the questions and/or their temperature is above 100.0° F. Vendors will have a designated door and be asked to complete the questionnaire and self-monitoring for temperature.

The NFCSD will adopt age-appropriate signs from the CDC, in common languages, for the instruction of hand and respiratory hygiene. The District website will also have videos to demonstrate proper handwashing and respiratory hygiene to inform staff, students, and family members.

All hallways and entranceways will have signs to remind persons of the six (6) feet social distancing guidelines, whenever possible. Markers will be placed six (6) feet apart in areas that will require a social distance line for entrance, food service, returning items, front desk reception areas, etc. If possible, all desks will be placed at least six (6) feet from door entranceways. If this is not possible, a door tag indicating to knock before entering will be set to ensure any employee working in proximity to the entranceway will be aware of others coming. All employees are required to view three (3) videos and read all written practices before entering any District building.

The NFCSD will offer medical home instruction for any student deemed unable to return to school due to illness or a family member at high risk living in the same home. A Doctor's note must be provided. All applications will be reviewed by the District Medical Director. Any parent

who is uncomfortable sending their child to school will be advised to file an application for home instruction, which will need to meet the requirements of an Individual Home Instruction Plan (IHIP).

Staff members will be required to provide to the District Medical Director documentation from their health care provider and will be eligible for any regulatory and contractual leave concerning COVID-19.

The NFCSD has implemented a mandatory policy requiring a face-covering/mask for all employees/adults and students at all times when in the school buildings.

The NFCSD will maintain all personal protective equipment in the District's warehouse, and each school nurse will obtain/maintain in each health office, at least two (2) complete sets of PPE required for use when staff members or students become ill. Each school nurse has been fit tested and provided a North-100 respirator to be used for any suspected or positive cases of COVID-19. All school buildings will request an adequate supply of age-appropriate face coverings for students and staff who forget to bring a comfortable one from home.

The NFCSD will follow the NYSDOH and CDC guidelines for a confirmed case of COVID-19 in schools. School nurses will consult with the Niagara County Department of Health for their protocols. All parties who came in close contact (defined as closer than six (6) feet even with a mask for greater than ten (10) minutes) will be asked to follow the guidelines from the NYSDOH and CDC for exposure to someone with COVID-19. After a 2-hour closure, the custodial staff will follow the CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the area. If a positive case is confirmed and the person has not attended school or work for greater than seven (7) days, no additional cleaning or disinfecting is necessary other than the regular daily cleaning and disinfecting. All students will be in school attendance two (2) consecutive days per week to assist in reducing the transmission rate from ill parties. This model automatically adheres to a 6-7-day home isolation with limited disruption of the school schedule.

Requirements for the student to return to school after exposure or confirmed illness is established from the NYSDOH and includes the following: parents are required to provide the school nurse with documentation following an evaluation from a health care provider, a negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result, and be symptom-free for 72 hours, including fever free without fever-reducing medication. Any student who tested positive for COVID-19, can return to school with documentation from the NCDOH release of isolation restrictions note.

Nonessential employees will follow the recommendation from the CDC and the NYSDOH guidelines for returning to work. This does include a 10-day isolation from the onset of symptoms or a 14-day self-quarantine after exposure from a confirmed case without experiencing symptoms. Staff members and students will be given written instructions on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and will be required to contact their medical provider for guidance on in-home care. All persons suspected or who came in contact with someone with COVID-19, will need to follow the NYSDOH recommendations to return to work/school.

The NFCSD custodial staff was trained in March 2020, on the CDC recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting within a school setting. Continued in-service will be provided as updated information becomes available.

The NFCSD will mandate all staff and students to comply with face-covering at all times. This will ensure that required school safety drills can be conducted. Once students and staff are in an area that is safe to become socially distant again, they will continue to be in compliance of the mandatory face-covering requirement at all times.

The NFCSD will partner with one agency, the Niagara Falls Boys and Girls Club (NFBGC), to provide before and aftercare programs within the school district buildings. NFBGC staff will be asked to follow all protocols of the District. Parents or a parent designee will be asked to drop off and pick up students at one specific door and wait outside for a NFBGC staff member to escort students to waiting parents. Other afterschool programs will continue to be monitored and established, as reopening progresses to full capacity.

The NFCSD will oversee the monitoring and compliance of the reopening District plan. The NYSDOH recommendations will be monitored daily, and adjustments will be made if necessary.

Facilities

The District will return students at 50% enrollment. As a result of this reduction, it is not foreseen that the District will need to build additions, temporary facilities or perform renovations to accommodate the necessary social distancing of both students and staff.

All regularly mandated facilities reporting will be completed, ahead of existing deadlines, including the District's lead in water testing and annual visual inspections.

Hand sanitizing, and hand washing hygiene signage, will be installed at all designated building entrances and in common area entrances. The installation and use of all hand sanitizing stations will be in accordance with New York Fire Code Section 5705.5.

Restroom and drinking fountains will be provided via the existing restrooms and drinking fountains within District buildings and will not fall below mandated occupant to fixture ratios. The District maintenance staff will provide signage to communicate proper hand and respiratory hygiene at all restroom facilities. In addition, the District will be removing from service all electric hand dryer appliances and replace them with low-touch paper towel dispensers prior to the end of August 2020.

To facilitate increased air changes, the District has increased operating times and will continue to do so for all air handler systems. The District is working with its HVAC controls contractor, Johnson Controls Inc. to increase the outdoor air supply to all student occupied spaces by 100% from the mandated 15cfm/occupant to 30cfm/occupant, by the end of August 2020.

In areas both external and internal to District buildings, where contact with members of the public is anticipated, i.e. outdoor walks, main offices and reception areas, social distancing markers and social distancing/mandatory mask reminder signage will be installed to promote proper social distancing. If the area does not afford proper social distancing, temporary polycarbonate separation dividers will be installed in a manner as to not violate BCNYS Section 2606.

The District will stock the following PPE in the District's warehouse to be distributed to all buildings via the District's warehouse requisition process: a combination of washable and disposable facemasks, disposable gowns, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, and surface sanitizing solution.

Ongoing reinforcement training of custodial cleaning staff will be mandated. Custodial cleaning staff will log the daily cleaning and disinfection of building areas and all high touch surfaces on a District provided tracking form.

Child Nutrition

The NFCSD will serve meals five (5) days per week. Students in attendance will be served breakfast in the cafeteria. A “grab and go” breakfast will be provided. Students in attendance will be served a bag lunch in the cafeteria. A “grab and go” lunch will be provided. Students not required to be in attendance for the day, will be provided a breakfast & lunch “grab and go.”

The NFCSD will communicate with local and state health departments to ensure all schools are following the latest food service guidelines.

The District will take measures to ensure all personnel safety and training needs are being met.

The District will conduct regular screening of employees daily. The District will review and edit, as needed, existing Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP). The District will establish procedures to ensure all food service staff involved in meal service are aware of basic food safety principles and the difference between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

The NFCSD will provide students with dietary needs, all reasonable accommodations. The District will provide professional development on food allergies to all staff members. The NFCSD is a Peanut-Free District.

The NFCSD will communicate, educate, and reinforce appropriate hygiene and social distancing practices in ways that are developmentally appropriate for students, teachers and staff.

The District will display promotional signage for proper handwashing procedures. Students will be instructed to wash their hands before entering the cafeteria.

Promotional signage discouraging food sharing will be displayed. Students will pick up a “grab and go” bag to discourage meal sharing. The District will enforce social distancing to ensure minimum exposure.

The District will establish procedures to ensure all staff involved in meal service is aware of all basic food safety principles. The District will ensure all necessary materials and supplies for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are available.

The NFCSD will ensure all meals being served meet meal patterns established by the New York State Child Nutrition program. The District will maintain all production records and follow all food safety procedures in accordance with State regulations.

The District will stagger meal times to help minimize the number of people dining at one time and to help maintain six feet social distancing. The District will develop a flow pattern – one way in and one way out, of the cafeterias.

Transportation

Bus drivers will be required to sanitize their bus at the conclusion of every run. This will result in cleaning occurring multiple times throughout the day. Drivers will be provided with COVID-19 approved disinfectant and supplies to be used to sanitize their entire bus, focusing on high contact areas, between runs.

The Bus Contractors will ensure that hand sanitizer is not placed on buses. Signs will be placed on buses stating that hand sanitizer must not be carried and/or utilized on buses.

The Bus Contractors will inform staff that they are not to carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer. Training will review this protocol. Signs will be placed on buses stating that hand sanitizer must not be carried and/or utilized on buses.

The Bus Contractors will check bus drivers, monitors, attendants, and mechanics on a daily basis to ensure that they are wearing a face covering. Any individual that is not wearing an appropriate face covering will be provided a face covering by the Contractor.

The Bus Contractors will provide training on the proper use of PPE and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 at the beginning of the year training.

Staff will be provided training on the proper use of social distancing.

The Bus Contractors have purchased face coverings, gloves, and other personal protective equipment that will be supplied to staff as needed.

The Bus Contractors have purchased and stationed nine (9) hand sanitizer stations throughout their facility. Hand sanitizer locations will be monitored and relocated as needed.

Based on the fact that drivers, monitors, and attendants all have contact with students, all individuals on buses will be required to wear gloves. Gloves will be supplied by the Contractors.

The Bus Contractors have purchased a device that will be used for signing into work and recording employee's temperature. The device has the capacity to have employees answer the District questionnaire.

The District will communicate to all students that wearing a face covering must occur on school busses at all times. If students do not have a face covering, one will be provided.

In the event that a student is unable to wear a face covering, the Bus Contractor will ensure that social distancing requirements are enacted and enforced.

Students will be trained on the proper use of personal protective equipment, social distancing, and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 at school and during beginning of the year bus drills. Students will be provided with periodic reminders throughout the year at school.

The District will ensure that pupil transportation will be equitably provided to nonpublic, parochial, charter, and students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). All of the aforementioned personal protective equipment and safety protocols will be enforced.

Social Emotional Well-Being

The NFCSD has a three-tiered comprehensive developmental school counseling program to address the social emotional learning and well-being of all students. This comprehensive plan was created under the direction of certified school district counselors. The comprehensive counseling plan aligns with New York State Standards, ASCA National Model, and reflects the mission and vision of our District. These plans were submitted to a smaller group of building teams consisting of principals, teachers, and counselors to ensure that each school is implementing the plan in a way that fits the needs of their specific student population. This plan was reviewed and updated in June 2020.

Each school has their own sub-committee consisting of multiple stakeholders including administrators at the School as well as District level, students, teachers, parents, social workers, and certified school counselors, whom draft, create, review, and update the developmental school counseling program plan annually. The District also has a separate committee with representatives from all eleven schools which provides oversight of initiatives and programs pertaining to students' social, emotional, and developmental well-being. This group meets bi-weekly and provides a framework, yearly goals, and resources for all District schools.

The NFCSD's District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) is focused on addressing the impact COVID-19 school closures have had on students' academic and social emotional learning needs. The District is adopting a Social Emotional Learning Curriculum that will be taught in grades Pre-K-6. A Universal Behavioral Screener will be administered to all students in grades K-6 to identify those in need of support. Behavioral interventions will be provided where applicable. Each school, with District support and resources, will offer tiered interventions to address students' mental health, behavioral, and emotional support via outside agencies and internal programming, such as Restorative Justice and School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention.

The District will be providing staff with multiple training sessions during the opening Superintendent's Conference days for professional development. This professional development will address balancing Social Emotional Learning needs and provide strategies for discussing the pandemic and its impact on students. In order to provide supports for developing coping and resilience skills for students, faculty, and staff, professional development on Trauma Informed Practices are open to teachers throughout the month of August. These sessions provide resources and tips on how to talk with and support student needs and concerns with regard to mental health. In addition, the District reopening plan includes "Transition Back to School Camps and Orientations," These will take place within each school building prior to the opening of the school year. These camps will welcome back students and families to school and address their needs regarding safety, as well as insight on COVID-19 rituals and routines.

School Schedules

The NFCSD will open in a hybrid model that promotes social distancing by limiting the number of students in a school building to 50% on a given day and provides time to ensure that school buildings can be deep cleaned between cohorts. The model will divide the students into two groups (i.e. Group A and Group B) with approximately 50% of students in each group. Group A will report to school for in-person instruction on Monday and Tuesday, and on Wednesday-Friday, they will be provided with remote instruction. Group B will be provided with remote instruction on Monday-Wednesday, and Group B students will report to school for in-person instruction on Thursday and Friday. No students will be in the school building on Wednesday, which allows time for deep cleaning of school buildings between student groups.

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

In the District's hybrid model, there are two areas that need to be considered for attendance collection: the in-person students and the students receiving remote instruction. Attendance for the in-person students will be recorded using the traditional attendance collection procedures. Students receiving remote instruction will be required to complete "exit tickets" upon the completion of daily lessons to indicate their participation in the lesson. The list of students who have completed the daily "exit tickets" will be used to record daily attendance.

Technology and Connectivity

In the spring of 2020, school administrators surveyed Niagara Falls households to identify the level of access to devices and high-speed Internet access.

Students - High School:

- 87% of high school students had access to devices and high-speed Internet.
- 13% required District assistance. Laptops and Internet access was provided upon request.
- In September 2020, households will be resurveyed to provide the District with an updated needs assessment.

Students - Prep School (2):

- 62% of prep school students had access to high-speed Internet.
- 38% required District assistance.
- In September 2020, households will be resurveyed to provide the District with an updated needs assessment.

Students - Elementary School (8):

- 73% of elementary school students had access to high-speed Internet.
- 27% required District assistance.
- In September 2020, households will be resurveyed to provide the District with an updated needs assessment.

Teachers:

- All instructional staff have been issued a District Lenovo laptop (Yoga 460, L450, L440 or L500) for home and in-school use.
- The District has leased a number of MiFi devices for distribution to teachers without home Internet access. There are no current requests from teachers for home Internet access.
- In September, teachers will be resurveyed to provide the District with updated technology needs.

Students:

- The District currently has 700 Lenovo laptops (model 140e) configured, with content filtering and systematic tracking, ready for home deployment.
- The District has a plan to reconfigure the one-to-one student laptop (Yoga 11e) population for home deployment.
- The District plan and device configuration will include the following:
 - Students will initially log-on to the District's network. This will allow for the systematic (GPO) push of required software, define home based configuration changes and allow for other protocol needs.
 - In order to connect to home or other Internet access points, AdHoc wireless permissions will be applied thru a systematic GPO push.

- The following required software / lockdown browsers will be configured for in-home use:
 - Testnav
 - Questar
 - Aimsweb
 - Kite
- An inventory is in place for additional or replacement student laptops.
- In regard to content filtering, the District is in the process of testing the systematic (GPO) push of a mobile filter.
- In-District network software will be reconfigured and/or disabled. The District is in the process of testing the systematic (GPO) push of this work.
- To ensure the integrity of device configuration and software/hardware use, all student profiles will be added to a local administration group that will exclude certain rights.
- The District is in the process of procuring the following equipment to be deployed with the Yoga 11e:
 - Power adapters.
 - Laptop carrying cases.

Staff

- All instructional staff have a District issued Lenovo laptop (Yoga 460, L450, L440 or L500) assigned to them for home and in-school use.
- An inventory is in place for additional or replacement staff laptops.
- The District has leased a practicable number of MiFi devices for distribution to teachers without home Internet access.
- Teachers can notify the Information Services Department to request a laptop and/or Internet access, or request a repair appointment.

Technology Based Learning Solutions (In-District and Home)

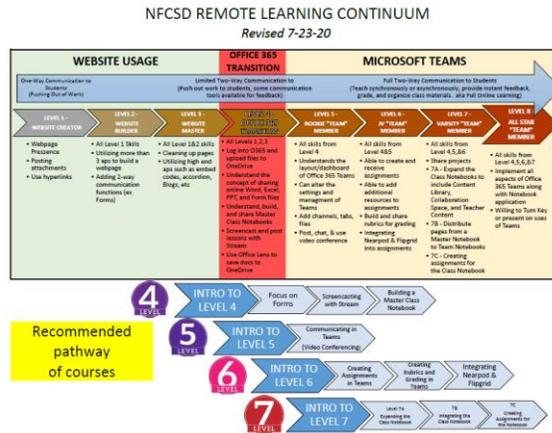
Existing software platforms:

- Consolidation of software tools is one of the Superintendent's goals. The current approved technology software includes:
 - Teaching Strategies Cloud
 - HMH Think Central
 - Pearson Realize
 - Cengage Digital
 - Razkids
 - BrainPop
 - MobyMax
 - Achieve3000
 - Amplify ELA
 - MY HRW
 - Reading Plus
 - Castle Learning

- eMath
- MyApp

Office 365 Housed / Based Learning Strategies, Resources and Tools:

- Flipped classroom.
- Office hours.
- Expanded office hours to full classroom.
- The following teacher training continuum is in place for teachers to learn the expected skill sets. Mastery of Level 6 is the expectation:



- Student / Parent technology information resources (hard copy and video) are in place to assist home system access and the use of technology.

Limited Technology Based Learning Solutions:

- Teachers have current websites that are built for the delivery and acceptance of learning information.
- This information can be obtained with minimal technology requirements in a variety of platforms.
- Learning materials can also be shared via email.

Non Technology Based Learning Solutions:

- The District has the following options for copying and distribution of learning materials:
 - School based copy machines.
 - In-district BOCES copy shop.
 - Vendor (Avalon) copying service.
 - School and Central Office based packet creation.
 - Central Office delivery to households.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning

The following section describes continuity of learning plans for the 2020-21 school year. Modified curriculum, concise delivery of instruction, and teacher input regarding closing learning gaps, interventions and instructional priorities are addressed. The District's expectations for hybrid/remote learning, student and teacher schedules, and training, support and communication to and among all stakeholders is included.

Instructional Models

In-Person Model

All staff and students will report to school each day of the week, at regularly scheduled times and for a full day of instruction. All learning will be delivered in a traditional manner, and extra-curricular activities and sports will be phased in as per guidance received from the NYDOH, NYSED and other governmental agencies as required. Though a return to the schedule described here is the District's ultimate goal, it is not currently feasible. To ensure student and staff safety, the hybrid model will be utilized in September 2020.

Hybrid Model

All students grades Pre-Kindergarten to 12, will return to school on a staggered schedule, whereby no more than 50% of the student body is present on a single day. Each classroom or course section will contain approximately half of enrolled students on any given day. The remaining students will participate in asynchronous instruction from home, utilizing District provided devices and mobile connectivity if needed. All students will engage in synchronous distance learning on Wednesday, to allow for deep cleaning and disinfection of school buildings. The graphic below depicts the hybrid learning student group rotation (A and B groups allow for 50% capacity).

Hybrid Learning Model

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<u>Group A</u> At school/in-person instruction	<u>Group A</u> At school/in-person instruction	All Students engage in synchronous distance learning Schedules vary by grade level Teacher office hours included in schedules	<u>Group A</u> At home/asynchronous instruction	<u>Group A</u> At home/asynchronous instruction
<u>Group B</u> At home/asynchronous instruction	<u>Group B</u> At home/asynchronous instruction	Schools are deep-cleaned	<u>Group B</u> At school/in-person instruction	<u>Group B</u> At school/in-person instruction

Remote Model

The District has created three differentiated Distance Learning Models, one each for elementary, middle, and high school. All are described in both graphic and narrative form in the ***City School District of the City of Niagara Falls Distance Learning Handbook***. Essential components are listed below:

- Asynchronous and synchronous lesson delivery are mandated at each level, including both core/course content, RtI/AIS, the arts, and physical education
- All students will receive live, synchronous instruction from their teacher(s) daily via the District's online learning platform, Microsoft Office 365, and have access to other District approved online resources embedded in required curricula
- All instruction will be standards-based, grade appropriate and grounded in District curriculum maps
- Time is provided each day for both new content and remediation and review, dependent upon student need and grade level
- Scheduled time engaged in online instruction is reasonable, differentiated by student age, and is repeated throughout the day so that students who share devices with siblings have multiple opportunities for live interaction with their teacher(s)
- Teachers will record live lessons for student/parent review and reference, and include frequent formative assessment via Microsoft Forms to ensure student progress is monitored and appropriate intervention is readily available
- Grading policies, by level, are included in the ***Distance Learning Handbook*** to ensure clarity of expectations and equity for all students
- The ***Distance Learning Handbook*** contains links to how-to videos and written directions for parents/students in need of technology support

Curriculum

Addressing Learning Gaps

In May of 2020, all elementary and prep level English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science teachers were surveyed and asked to provide input on how best to address COVID-19 learning loss during the 2020-21 school year. Teachers offered opinions on the most critical content and standards at their grade, including which could be minimized or eliminated to enable review of critical content from the previous level. Instructional coaches and lead teachers reviewed all feedback, and revised ELA and Math curriculum maps for all grade levels Kindergarten to Grade 8. Initial instruction will review those standards that were likely not mastered by many students due to the sudden transition to remote learning. In addition, guidance documents and in some cases resources have been inserted to assist teachers in differentiating instruction and closing learning gaps. Finally, pacing documents have been relaxed to allow more time throughout the school year for re-teaching and mastery of power standards and prioritized skills. At mandated teacher professional development sessions scheduled prior to the start of the school year, all teachers will receive in-service on the amended curricula and guidance, and provided collaborative planning time to process the updates and formulate their plans with support from colleagues.

High School teachers will review their course maps, in collaborative teams, during the mandated teacher professional development sessions described above to discuss condensing content within the scope of Regents requirements. Most of their collegial planning and support time will center on transferring their essential content and student learning activities to the District's online platform.

Communication Protocols for Students and Families

The District has used multiple modes of communication, such as autodialer phone calls, YouTube videos, and the District and school websites to share daily updates with families since the COVID-19 closure began in March of 2020. Beginning August 3, clear communication regarding re-opening plans for the 2020-21 school year will begin in the same manner. The following will be described to families daily throughout the month of August and into early September:

- District plans for in-person, distance and hybrid learning
- Expectations for participation in online learning in distance and/or hybrid models by grade span
- Expectations for student attendance
- Adapted grading policies, by grade level, to be utilize during hybrid and distance learning models
- Clear lists of the content to be covered in a given week, with assignments and due dates so that students/parents may manage their time efficiently
- Distribution of technology and how to obtain tech assistance as needed
- Schools where ELL pupils are housed will be responsible for translating seminal documents into the parents' language of preference

All teachers will maintain a webpage on which various documents and links will be posted. Those should include teacher contact information, directions for accessing Microsoft Office Teams, reiteration of attendance and grading policies, teacher office hours and guidelines for messaging teachers and reasonable response times.

Teacher Preparation for Hybrid and Remote Instruction

Throughout the spring 2020 COVID-19 school closure period, the District's technology integrators conducted remote training sessions for all teachers on webpage development, two-way communication tools such as Microsoft Forms, Office 365 functions such as Class Notebook and Teams, videoconferencing, and integration of apps such as Nearpod and Flipgrid. These sessions will be repeated throughout the month of August and within mandated teacher professional development days prior to the start of the school year. The District's expectation is that all teachers be fluent in the technology tools/online platforms listed to ensure equity of access to quality instruction for all students. The aforementioned ***Distance Learning Handbook*** clearly delineates the teachers' role in remote learning, the District-approved tools and platforms that are to be used, and guidelines for meeting the needs of different learners in the remote setting.

Continuity of Learning for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities: Co-teaching

The District has moved to a co-teaching delivery model, wherein a general education teacher and special educator collaborate to provide differentiated instruction of grade level curriculum. Special educators follow District guidelines and processes for Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and will continue to do so whether engaged in in-person or distance learning settings.

English Language Learner and Students with Disabilities – Expectations for Remote Instruction

Teachers of English Language Learners (ELL) and consultant special education teachers will, in both hybrid and fully remote learning models, be responsible for the delivery of students' instructional services in accordance with IEP goals and mandated minutes in Commissioner's regulations. To accomplish this, ELL teachers and special educators will:

- Join the general educator's instructional team and participate in live, synchronous instruction to the fullest extent possible
 - Co-present if planned (one teach/one support)
 - Monitor the student chat box, answer questions, repeat directions in type, and/or provide feedback while the general education teacher leads the lesson
- Create, within the general education teacher's Microsoft Team, a private channel for his/her students only where she/he will post modified assignments and other support documents
 - Meet with students using *Meet Now* as needed for content review and support
 - Provide extra assistance/lesson support via the chat box
- Schedule consistent office hours during which students may contact the teacher for extra assistance

Special Education

In accordance with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), each student has differentiated needs that must be addressed by their IEP. It is the responsibility of each educational system to assure that each student with special needs has access to their programs at their grade level and has the tools necessary to make progress within their grade level learning standards. During the COVID-19 crisis, each school's special education team will be responsible to review student IEP's and determine an appropriate program with related services and program modifications to meet each student's special needs with in person and remote learning. As stated in a previous section, the NFCSD will provide a hybrid instructional model. Special education services will also be provided in the hybrid format. Service providers, special education staff, and classroom teachers, will review each student's IEP and make the necessary arrangements to deliver services ensuring the student's health and safety while taking into consideration their individual needs. Related services will be provided in a Hybrid format including teletherapy and in person sessions.

With emphasis on remaining socially distant, the District's Special Education Office, will enhance the department webpage. The NFCSD has moved to a co-teaching model, where there is a general education teacher and special education teacher working together to provide grade level curriculum. This will provide for not only co-instruction in person with Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), but this will allow for SDI to continue during asynchronous learning. Special educators will provide students in this model with modifications to assist in their progress of the learning target.

Educators will contact parents weekly to inform them of progress, as well as to check in with students on learning targets. Additionally, Special Education Teams will document contact with parents/guardians in Frontline's contact log. Furthermore, as required through NYSED Part 200 regulations, prior written notice requirements will continue to be adhered to.

The NFCSD will continue to use interpreters in person and remotely to ensure families are provided information and can participate in meetings in their preferred communication. Translation software and/or service will also be utilized whenever necessary, to provide written communication in a family's preferred language. The NFCSD will continue to use NYSED resources (i.e. RBERN) in communicating with families where English is a second or new language.

The Offices of the Committee on Pre-School Education (CPSE) and the Committee on Special Education (CSE) for the NFCSD share an office and have staff that are represented on both committees. This has allowed both committees to have seamless and open lines of communication regarding the transitioning of a child and his or her services from CPSE to CSE. IEPs are developed and documented through an online system (Frontline) and are easily transferrable to other providers. In addition to collegial conversations, this will also provide documentation of recommendations, accommodations, and communication with all parties.

The NFCSD will continue to provide the necessary services and accommodations to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability by implementing Districtwide evaluation procedures. With respect to assistive technology, the NFCSD Special Education, and Information Services Departments have consulted with the University at Buffalo's Center of

Assistive Technology to develop an evidence-based evaluation process for assistive technology supports. Additionally, any supports or training needs for families and students regarding newly introduced technology will be provided by in-district staff and will be done remotely or in person.

Bilingual Education and World Languages

The District will complete the ELL identification process within 30 school days of the start of the school year for all students who enrolled during COVID-19 school closures, the summer of 2020, or within the first 20 days of the 2020-21 school year.

The District will continue to administer the Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ) and conduct individual interviews as the first step of the ELL identification process. Certified personnel will determine if a language other than English is spoken at home. Family interviews, and all other home-school communication, will be conducted remotely or in person, as needed, and in the family's preferred language.

Once the school year begins, the ELL identification process will be conducted in person, including a full parent orientation in the language preference of the students' families, according to State and federal requirements.

ELL teachers will provide appropriate instruction and support to all ELL students. Services will be delivered both in person and via Distance Learning platforms, as described in the District re-opening plan as necessary during Distance Learning, Hybrid, or in-person phases of re-opening. Teachers will deliver targeted, scaffolded instruction based upon each student's level of language proficiency and mandated minutes of support. Content and ELL co-teachers will provide instruction to all ELL pupils that is collaboratively planned, differentiated, and transferable from in-person to distance learning models as necessary.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation System

The NFCSD will maintain compliance with New York State Education Law 3012-d requiring annual professional performance evaluations of teachers and principals.

Where possible and appropriate, in-person observations using the negotiated rubrics and procedures will be conducted by evaluators. If due to health and safety concerns it is not possible to conduct in person observations, evaluators will work with educators to conduct remote observations.

Finally, if remote observation is required, educators and evaluators will follow sanitary precautions and protocols to complete the appropriate review of teacher and student work.

Certification, Incidental Teaching, and Substitute Teaching

All teachers in the NFCSD are properly certified in the content area being taught. The District reviews the certification status of initially certified staff twice a year and works with the Orleans Niagara BOCES Regional Certification Specialist in the event any questions, issues, and/or concerns arise.

It is the District's intention to only utilize the services of teachers holding the correct content area certification for long term substituting appointments. In the event a properly certified substitute is not available, the District will fully comply with the regulatory time limits while searching for a teacher substitute with the proper certification.

The Niagara Falls City School District is currently in the Hybrid Learning model. In the event of inclement weather, the Superintendent of Schools may require totally remote learning for all students and staff in lieu of school cancellation on a day to day basis. This provision has been added as of October 1st, 2020.

Mark Laurrie
Superintendent